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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 007406

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL LE JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN ENDORSES UNSC RESOLUTION ON LEBANON

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Jordanian Foreign Minister Muasher publicly endorsed the recent UNSC resolution on the Lebanese presidential elections during a press conference on September 6. While stressing that the resolution "must be carefully studied," he noted that Jordan had never stood against any of the Security Council resolutions "regardless whether we agreed with it or not." He emphasized that follow-up must be carefully orchestrated to allow for the appropriate dialogue with the international community, adding that he believed the issue would be raised during the upcoming Arab Foreign Ministers' Conference.

¶12. (C) Privately, a proud Muasher expressed to Charge on September 7 his satisfaction in eliciting "screams" from the Syrians after the GOJ endorsed the UNSC resolution. He cited Jordan opposition to Syrian regional policies as well as Jordan's traditionally "friendly" relations with the Lebanese people as grounds for his statement.

¶13. (C) He said that the Lebanese -- but not the Syrians -- had already approached the Arab League to discuss how to handle a response to the Security Council action. Muasher said he called Amr Moussa to tell him that if there was any move afoot in the Arab League to condemn the UN action, Jordan would object. Moussa agreed that an expression of League opposition to the Security Council was not desirable, according to Muasher.

¶14. (C) Comment: Jordanian officials have welcomed a tougher U.S. line on Syria in general, given their own litany of security and political problems with Damascus, and in particular welcomed U.S. efforts to isolate Syria on the issue of presidential elections. In addition to their geostrategic thinking, Jordan's leaders have been motivated by increasingly close ties with Lebanese PM Hariri, whose profile in Amman -- his wife's hometown -- is growing by the day. In addition to having bought a controlling share in Jordan's largest bank, the Arab Bank, during the past year, Hariri is said to have contributed significantly to the favored charities of the King and Queen. He also has promised to play a prominent role in redeveloping a blighted area of downtown, the Abdali district, along the model of a Hariri brainchild, the Solidere project that revived central Beirut. That scheme for Amman includes a favorite project of Queen Rania, an AUB-modeled American University of Jordan. Hariri's access to King Abdullah, as well as Jordan's own interest in pressuring Damascus, no doubt in part accounts for Jordan's bolder, and notably public line on Lebanon's presidential elections.

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HALE